

# Hydration project - Four Seasons Health Care

Four Seasons Health Care owns and operates more than 500 care homes and specialised care centres throughout the UK. It employs more than 30,000 staff and currently cares for more than 26,000 people. The company developed an initiative to promote good hydration within our facilities.

## **The Project**

The company has always recognised good hydration as a vital component of care and has had a Hydration Policy in force for many years. However the company's latest initiative in this field came about simply through one of our homes trialing juice dispensers and identifying a marked improvement in resident alertness. Staff particularly noticed a reduction in the 'after-dinner' slump with less residents sleeping away their afternoon.

The project aimed to have as many homes as possible showing an increase in juice consumption. Tea is most popular drink in our elderly care homes and, in many cases, the main direct source of hydration. Plain water is not too popular, so the company hoped that if more juice was consumed it would mean intake increased. In addition, the company wanted to tackle the amount of day-time snoozing and allow residents to participate in more events and activities which increase quality of life.

Staff education on benefits of good hydration and dangers of poor hydration were kept to a minimum by incorporating them into a pre-planned programme of events, and hydration training is now part of company e-learning package.

Drinks dispensers and solutions are absorbed into general food budget and homes spend according to need. However, with proper education, cost for consumables for this type of initiative can be nil as tap water is freely available.

The company worked with a drinks supplier who contacted the care homes and offered a range of various flavours of juice. Homes were encouraged to celebrate the new range of flavours by encouraging residents to take part in tasting sessions. We worked with Personal Activities Co-coordinators to incorporate the juices into as many of their activity sessions as they could.

### **The Benefits**

Feedback from many homes included that residents were more aware and alert resulting in greater participation in activities; reduction in daytime snoozing resulting in less disturbed night-time sleep and less complaints of headaches. A study in two homes revealed a 10% reduction in laxatives dispensed and a 10% drop in noted urinary infections in the four months following the introduction of juice dispensers. One of the homes also noted a 30% reduction in the number of falls.

**For more information,** please contact

Christine Hamilton, Group Executive Chef, Tel 01625 417861 or email: [christine.hamilton@fshc.co.uk](mailto:christine.hamilton@fshc.co.uk)

Or visit: [www.fshc.co.uk](http://www.fshc.co.uk)